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Dobb, Maurice Herbert

In Soviet Russia, autumn 1930

[New York]

[1930]

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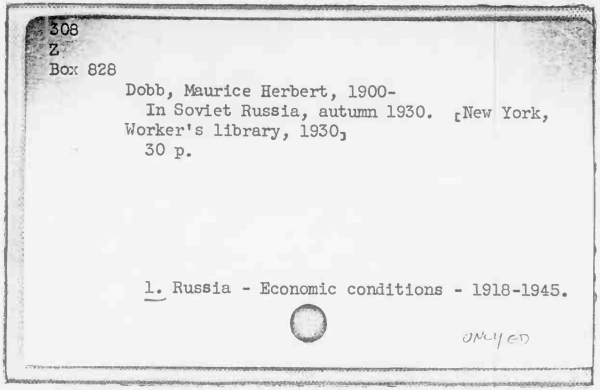

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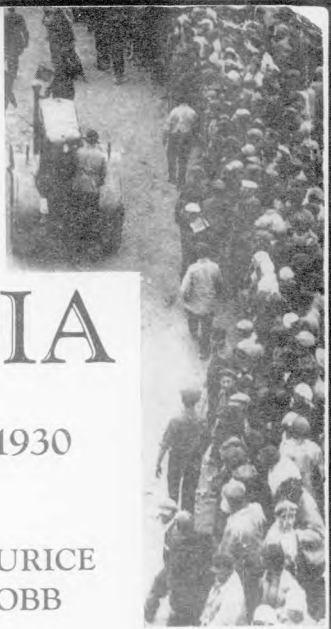
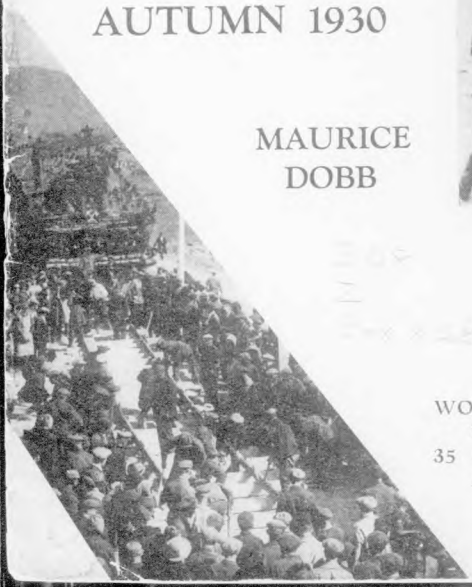


# IN SOVIET RUSSIA

## AUTUMN 1930

MAURICE DOBB



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# IN SOVIET RUSSIA
## AUTUMN 1930

MAURICE DOBB

I. CONCERNING "PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS"
II. THE NEW ECONOMIC REVOLUTION
III. STALINGRAD—AND CHICAGO
IV. *GIGANT*—AND THE MIDDLE WEST
V. "WORKERS' DEMOCRACY"
VI. THE REVOLUTION IN THE VILLAGE
VII. WHEAT EXPORTS AND WAR-CLOUDS

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## I

RUSSIA this year is said to have had altogether some 10,000 tourists of all kinds. Some of these have been workers' delegations, many of them bourgeois visitors come to get a sensation and to see a new thing. Naturally, the press in Western countries has been flooded with their travellers' tales. Some of these impressions have been favourable, some unfavourable, some just a mixture of rather puzzled ideas as to what is really going on. Very few of the stories of *petit-bourgeois* visitors who have spent ten days to three weeks going round in motor-cars seeing sights have really given any picture and, if they have given a picture, the several pictures are so contradictory as to puzzle rather than to enlighten.

Perhaps the first thing to get into one's mind if one is going to read what other people say about Russia, or to try and give a picture of it oneself, is the almost complete worthlessness of all such purely personal impressions, so long at any rate as they remain simply on the plane of "impressions." Such impressions are first of all subjective, in the sense that they depend upon the prejudices and mental spectacles of the person in question. Secondly, they depend on the angle of vision, what and whom one sees and how one sees it: it makes a great difference to one's feelings about Russia whether one sees it through the glass windows of a motor-car or through the steamy windows of a crowded Moscow tram. Third, and perhaps not least important, they depend very often upon the effect of Russian food on the digestion! There is a further reason why such impressions give one very little of the real picture. The average bourgeois "investigator," be he never so "honest" and thorough, always attempts to interpret what he has seen in terms of the set ideas of bourgeois learning, to fit events into an existing set of pigeon-holes learnt from University textbooks. This one cannot do and it is fatal to understanding. Such interpretations are invariably static. Bourgeois political and social theory thinks that history develops like a syllogism in logic, "broadening down from precedent to precedent," and does not understand that history is a *process*, creating and at the same time created by contradictions. When he sees that Russia is full of contradictions, he either shuts his eyes to all but one aspect of them and comes away to curse and revile, or else he remains puzzled, unable to explain, frankly unable to give any general picture.

What is happening in Russia to-day, where history is moving at a faster rate, probably, than ever before? It cannot be thought of in terms of a single picture, it cannot really be understood even in terms of a number of separate photographs of isolated events at a particular time and in a particular place. One rather needs to think of it as a cinematograph film. Only then can one understand the *movement* of it; only then do the contradictions acquire pattern, rhythm, meaning. Most individual impressions can give no more at best than single photographs which go to the making of this film. To attempt to give a picture means to try to give some idea of the whole as a moving process, not merely little scattered isolated bits which by themselves have no significance.

"Russia is a large place." The Soviet Union comprises some 140 different languages and over 100 different nationalities at various stages of development. Almost anything that may be said, however true, probably finds its exact contrary somewhere in the Soviet Union; and since everything is in process of rapid change continually this is even more true between one time and another. If one compares the surface of life in Russia to-day with what it was like eighteen months ago, and five years ago, the differences one notices are themselves full of contradiction and are at first sight very puzzling. In the first place, life in Russia is hard to-day. This I was continually told from the moment I crossed the Russian frontier. A year and a-half ago the system of food rationing was just beginning, but outside certain rationed categories things were fairly plentiful. Shops were well stocked, at any rate compared with five years ago. There were plenty of street sellers selling anything from luscious pears and apples from the Caucasus, quite cheap, to wooden spoons and toy balloons. To-day the rationed category has extended fairly widely. The bread ration itself is pretty liberal: it is doubtful whether more bread would be consumed by the average worker's family if the ration were removed, and in addition to the bread ration the worker gets bread served with his meals at his factory or club dining room, while at a rather higher price he can buy black bread without his ration card. But of other things, such as tea and sugar, the ration is much more stringent, while butter, milk and eggs are difficult to obtain except at extortionate prices from private sellers in the street. The "goods-famine" as it is called has got noticeably sharper; the shelves of the State and Co-operative shops are frequently empty or else full simply of one or two lines of goods, perhaps hats or, as I saw in one large Moscow "Universal" Store a notice on the door saying—"Beds Only." As a result of this queues form as soon as the rumour spreads that a shop has a stock of any of these "short" commodities, perhaps goloshes or soap or paraffin. A year and a-half ago, meat was surprisingly plentiful. Since then (largely because the rich peasants, as part of their opposition to the collectivisation movement, killed off their cattle last winter), meat (although the worker does not go seriously short of it) is scarce, and there are periodically "meatless days." This is the first thing that the ordinary tourist sees; he is shocked by it; he writes to the papers about it when he gets home and says that Russia is heading for a crisis and that this is what the Bolshevik "paradise" is bringing Russia to.

One does not begin to notice quite so easily another side to the picture until one has penetrated deeper and roamed further afield. But even to the casual visitor one of the most striking things is the amazing amount of building and construction work that is going on everywhere. This summer every Moscow street was a chaos because they were all being repaired; and "repaired" means taking up the old cobble-stones which were always the feature of old half-Eastern Moscow, and laying down modern asphalt surfaces. In the centre of Moscow are a large number of new buildings, some architecturally very fine—new post and telegraph offices, the Lenin Institute, to my



mind the most interesting piece of modern architecture that I have seen; a new giant Co-operative headquarters in process of erection; and a large new Headquarters of the Central Executive Committee, larger than the London Bush House. But it is only when one goes out to the outskirts of Moscow that one sees to the full extent the building that has been done. It is in the outskirts, not in the centre, that whole suburbs of new workers' flats are springing up. What from photographs looked some of the most interesting buildings, workers' clubs, etc., on the outskirts, I personally was unable to visit. On the Leningrad road there is a large new Sports Stadium, to hold 60,000 spectators, singularly beautiful with its arrangement of dominating curves. Unless he happens to travel by road the ordinary visitor does not see the first-class motor roads that are being constructed between Leningrad and Moscow (longer than from London to Aberdeen) and from Moscow to Nijni-Novgorod. There is more building of all sorts in Moscow than in Lenigrad, and in many districts of the South more than in either. One has to visit places like Stalingrad or the Ukraine or the Caucasus to see some of the amazing, almost epic pieces of industrial construction like the half-mile-wide Dniepostroi dam scheme. One has to travel into Asia to see up-to-date cotton factories, power stations and irrigation schemes springing up in a country where turbanned Uzbeks and Khirgis and Turcomans, sections of them still nomad wanderers on camel caravan teams, carry on the way of life and livelihood of six centuries ago, where Mullahs cry at sunset from the mosque, where Sarts still jealously guard their veiled wives like household property and Biblical water-sellers ply their trade in the bazaars of Bokhara and Samarkand; or to see the famous Turksib Railway, a thousand miles long, constructed in two and a-half years, opening up a whole, vast, thinly-peopled nomad area rich in possible wheatlands, rich in a variety of mineral wealth.

But it is only when one leaves the main towns and the ordinary travelled highways and goes into the countryside that one gets any idea of the real magnitude of the economic revolution which has taken place within a single year and is still going on. A year ago Russian agriculture was still mainly a matter of small-scale semi-Asiatic methods of cultivation, a large part of it carried on in small ten-to-twelve acre farms with hand ploughs, some often wooden, the land distributed in thin scattered strips, each peasant owning perhaps six or a dozen of these in different parts of the village, often several miles distant from one another. The Russian village was a collection of decrepit-looking wooden huts, where the cattle inhabited the living room, a candle burnt to the ikon in the corner and its owner paid the priest to scatter Holy Water on his fields as the surest way of improving the crop. One still sees scattered narrow strips yielding their thin harvest. One still sees these tumble-down villages of log-huts with their long-haired priests and rickety children, women reaping in the fields with the hand sickle, binding up the corn laboriously with bent backs in the scorching sun, the menfolk threshing with flails and winnowing in Biblical fashion by throwing the chaff into the wind. A year and a-half ago the sowing campaign was still being

discussed in terms of educating and encouraging the peasant to improve these old-fashioned methods of tillage. As I heard a furrowed grey-haired peasant woman end her speech in a Soviet meeting that I chanced upon: "We must learn to use not God but science to help us in the work in the village."

To-day, side by side with these scattered strips one sees with equal frequency large areas of well-tilled fields being harvested by machine combines or being ploughed again ready for the autumn by tractors which traverse furrows a quarter to half a mile in length. One sees new State Farms on virgin land in North Caucasus or Kazakstan where the whole landscape is one ploughed field, broken only by tractor teams. In place of the squalid villages, one sees the beginnings of new, modern-looking brick farm buildings and dwellings, the new headquarters of State and collective farms. A year ago, collective and State farms made up no more than 6% of the agricultural area. In the summer of 1930 already a third of the grain area, a quarter of the peasant households and over half of the marketed grain surplus was covered by the collectivised section. To such an immense revolution within one year in the whole face of semi-Asiatic "Holy Russia" it would be hard to find a historical parallel. The agricultural revolution which transformed England round about 1800 and took 50 years or so to do it is an incomplete parallel. This, it is true, transformed English agriculture from the mediæval open-field system to enclosed and concentrated capitalist farms, their scale varying between 100 to 1,000 or perhaps 2,000 acres. But to-day a 1,000 acre farm is a distinctly small collective; a medium collective farm has 20,000 or 30,000 acres, while the new State farms reach the gigantic size of 200,000 to 300,000 acres. Moreover, in Russia to-day the enclosure of holdings and the tillage of vast tracts of virgin soil in Siberia, Kazakstan and North Caucasus marches with electricity, with tractor teams and the machine combine, ploughing and harvesting scores of hectares in a day. An agricultural revolution of this magnitude achieved within a year! There is still much to be accomplished. The struggle still rages. But one can virtually say that the decisive part of the battle has already been won. What the Five Year Plan provided for agricultural collectivisation by the end of 1933 has been achieved and even surpassed by the harvest of 1930.



## II

How is one to explain these contradictions in Russian development?

The contradictions are in fact fundamental to an understanding of the new revolution. What is puzzling to the bourgeois theorist is itself the key to understanding for the Marxist, and that is why only Marxists can understand Russia to-day. The years of the Civil War were the period when the basis of the propertied class was being ruthlessly destroyed and its resistance to its own expropriation was being broken. The years of the New Economic Policy ("NEP") were the period of breathing space for economic reconstruction, characterised particularly by a compromise with peasant agriculture, consolidating the agricultural "flank" so that an advance could take place on the industrial front. The individualist peasant was granted freedom of trade and security and encouraged to increase his crop to supply the towns and industry with the raw produce they required. And this implied the revival of a free market (within limits) and to a limited extent the ordinary methods of commercial dealings and organisation reminiscent of capitalism. By 1927 the reconstruction of industry had been achieved and the problem was of carrying forward the industrialisation of the country beyond and above the pre-war level. Before the war, Russia had only made a beginning of the industrial revolution through which Britain had passed 150 years before. 85% of the Russian population still lived in the countryside, dependent upon agriculture. Large-scale factory industry employed no more than some two million wage earners. How to build Socialism in a predominantly backward agricultural land of small peasants?—that was the question. One of the basic principles of Lenin's doctrine was that Socialism would be established only in the degree that industrialisation, with its keynote electrification, proceeded. Industrialisation implies first and foremost mechanisation. It means increasing the amount of mechanical power compared to human power in production—in Marxian terminology, raising the "organic composition of capital"–and to this end it means that an increasing proportion of economic energies has to be devoted to making machines, as distinct from working up finished commodities to be passed across the counter to the final user. While the process of industrialisation continues, therefore, a much larger proportion of the available resources—materials, skill, labour, power—has to be devoted to constructional work of all kinds—building railways, factories, power stations, and installing machinery to make machinery—and consequently a smaller proportion of resources to making goods for consumption like hats, coats, boots and gramophones. This is the inner meaning of the goods-famine to-day. Turbines and textile machinery are imported instead of coffee and silk stockings. The supply of tractors is increased in preference, at the moment, to the supply of boots or clothes.

All other countries in history which have gone through this process, known as the industrial revolution, have done so on the basis of capitalism. This has meant that the capital necessary to achieve the change has been accumulated by a historical process at the expense of the

impoverishment (and therefore reduced consumption) of a rural and urban proletariat deprived of land and of the means of independent livelihood; also, in a large number of important cases (England, for instance, under Mercantilism), at the expense of the exploitation of colonial agrarian areas lying outside the country in question. Having accumulated this capital, the capitalist class then itself invested the proceeds in setting up factories and railways, etc., and widening the area of its exploitation of wage-labour. In other words, the industrialisation process was carried on under the control and dominance of an exploiting class and the results of the process went to the enrichment of an exploiting class. In a Workers' State, clearly, the industrialisation process is entirely different, for the reason that the capital necessary to carry it through is not accumulated in the hands of an exploiting class and the process is not dominated by such a class in its own interests. The capital necessary to finance Socialist industrialisation is created by a process of Socialist accumulation, *i.e.*, the community taking into its hands part of the collective resources of the community and devoting them to constructional work instead of to serve the ends of immediate consumption. When this constructional work is completed it yields its fruits to the whole community in the increased supply of commodities that it makes possible.

Two years ago, it was becoming clear that the further development of the industrialisation programme was being seriously handicapped by the relative backwardness of agriculture. Agriculture had reached the limit of its growth save at a very slow tempo on its old basis—on the basis of the small peasant farm with its primitive methods. Industry needed rapidly increasing supplies of raw materials, the towns needed grain, and the Soviet State needed to develop its export of grain in order to purchase machinery from abroad. The future of industrialisation was inevitably bound up with the position of agriculture. The semi-Asiatic peasant looked like bringing to naught the plans to build up Socialism in an agrarian country.

There were only two ways out. One was to encourage the growth of the larger, more prosperous peasant (the kulak), who, being richer, could afford to farm with better implements on a larger scale and so to produce an increasing surplus of grain for the market. Various petty-bourgeois economists in Russia and the Right Wing elements inside the Party made proposals amounting to this: "Treat the kulak more kindly; cut down the tempo of industrialisation to what is ' objectively possible,' *i.e.*, what the conditions of peasant agriculture allow." Such a policy, however, would have meant that the march towards Socialism in Russia was being purchased at the expense of reviving the beginnings of a capitalist class in the village. Industrialisation would be resting one foot on the kulak. Lenin, it is true, under "Nep" based the reconstruction of industry on concessions to the peasant, but to the *middle* peasant, never on the basis of a revival of a rural capitalist class (small-scale peasant agriculture may be individualist, petty-bourgeois, but is it not necessarily capitalistic?). To have based industrialisation on such a foundation would have



been dangerous in the extreme, if it had not distorted altogether its Socialist character. In a country where 85 per cent. of the population is peasant, it would have meant reviving the influence of the kulak with his ideology over the village and hence over 85 per cent. of the population. Not only would this have been taking one step back for every step forward, it might well have meant a distortion of the whole Soviet State and its policy—a kulak deviation of the State.

The only alternative, a sharp and clear alternative, was to take a step beyond "Nep," to surmount the limits which peasant agriculture imposed on industry precisely by affecting an agricultural revolution itself in the direction of Socialism. It consisted, in other words, in ending the reliance of the Soviet State on the petty-bourgeois peasant which had called for so much caution, even concessions and temporising, in the past, and resting the flank of industrialisation on a new collectivist agriculture. That is why the 15th Party Congress adopted the slogan of rapid collectivisation in agriculture, and the campaign for industrialisation over the last two years has marched hand in hand with the "drive" for collectivisation in the village. It is not by chance that the two processes—the industrial revolution and the agricultural revolution—have gone together: they are inseparably, logically, connected as the next stage in the transition to Socialism in Russia. Together they constitute the single process—the new economic revolution which is taking place twelve years after the October Revolution.

New Construction: The Lenin Institute, Moscow

INTENTIONAL SECOND EXPOSURE

impoverishment (and therefore reduced consumption) of a rural and urban proletariat deprived of land and of the means of independent livelihood; also, in a large number of important cases (England, for instance, under Mercantilism), at the expense of the exploitation of colonial agrarian areas lying outside the country in question. Having accumulated this capital, the capitalist class then itself invested the proceeds in setting up factories and railways, etc., and widening the area of its exploitation of wage-labour. In other words, the industrialisation process was carried on under the control and dominance of an exploiting class and the results of the process went to the enrichment of an exploiting class. In a Workers' State, clearly, the industrialisation process is entirely different, for the reason that the capital necessary to carry it through is not accumulated in the hands of an exploiting class and the process is not dominated by such a class in its own interests. The capital necessary to finance Socialist industrialisation is created by a process of Socialist accumulation, *i.e.*, the community taking into its hands part of the collective resources of the community and devoting them to constructional work instead of to serve the ends of immediate consumption. When this constructional work is completed it yields its fruits to the whole community in the increased supply of commodities that it makes possible.

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New Construction: The Lenin Institute, Moscow

## III

Under capitalism it is left to the chance of the market and the whim or self-interest of capitalist *entrepreneurs* to decide where a new factory shall be planted, and the result, as we know in this country, is a pretty good chaos: hundreds of small factories and workshops dotted about inconveniently in the middle of our big towns, destroying the health of the workers with smoke and fumes, producing chaotic congestion of urban areas and destroying the countryside with unplanned, straggling, slate-roofed houses and factories for miles. It is true that to a considerable extent it comes about in the course of years that industries get concentrated or localised in certain areas which seem to be the most appropriate for them. But this comes about under the magnet of purely capitalist interests, and, since it is unplanned, it often happens that an industry gets planted down for some reason in a certain place and then stays there out of inertia, or because there is cheap labour there, even when the industry would be much more economically situated somewhere else. In the U.S.S.R. to-day the "localisation" of new industry is carefully planned with a view to the best interests, economic and general, of the whole Soviet Union, and planned with an eye to the future. To this end the Soviet Union has recently been charted out into a number of economic regions. The development of each of these regions is then planned according to its resources and to its situation relative to markets for its products. First of all, the power development of the region is planned, power stations and power schemes constructed, and then industries grouped round the power schemes in the best possible way. New transport development will also be simultaneously organised so as to fit in with this double scheme of power development and the utilisation of the natural resources of the area. Under capitalism, one of these developments may take place, first of all on its own, under one set of motives; and then for ever afterwards everything else will have to adapt itself to this and make the best of it, even if, as is probably the case, a different sort of combination of raw materials, power and transport would be much better. Further, since the development of the new industries in Russia is planned from the outset, the growth of industrial towns can also be planned and controlled. In Russia to-day this is of enormous importance. The new "Socialist Cities" which are being built as industrialisation proceeds are not the chaotic, straggling mess that under capitalism we come to hate as a spoiler of natural beauty, but are carefully constructed with an eye to their most appropriate size and position, with careful regard for gardens, open spaces, and with the style of architecture also carefully designed to fit the general character and atmosphere of a healthy, vigorous, collectivist workers' community. Moreover, it is planned so that towns shall not get too large and unwieldy and so that belts of open country shall be left around them and between them for purpose of workers' recreation. One special feature which distinguishes this planned development of industry is the particular attention that is given to the industrial development of the outlying parts of the Soviet Union, the development of which was often hampered



under Tsarism in the interests of keeping them in the position of agrarian colonies of the centre. For instance, the industrialisation of the Soviet Republics in the Caucasus is proceeding at a rapid pace—in some respects more rapidly than that of the central provinces round Moscow and Leningrad. Turkestan is being made an important new centre of cotton production, and, in the near future, with the opening up of the region through which the Turksib railway runs, we may see big developments of industrialisation round the mineral wealth of the nomad wastes of Kazakstan. Siberia, across the Urals, is already taking on part of the character of the industrial districts of Middle America fifty years ago.

The town of Stalingrad is a typical example of this process. Stalingrad was formerly Tsaritsin. It is a town on the lower reaches of the Volga, some 400 miles above where the Volga flows out amid the marshes of Astrakhan into the Caspian Sea. One can approach it by steamer down the river—it takes four or five days to do so from Nijni-Novgorod which is on a line with Moscow—and for days the Volga, a mile wide, or at flood times even wider, meanders on between its low banks of sandhills or thinly wooded cliffs. Oil barges come up carrying oil from Baku on the Caspian Sea to the interior of Russia. Immense rafts of timber float down the river to be intercepted and taken on shore at the sawmills of Stalingrad. As one approaches the town from the river, it has the appearance simply of a big, straggling village of wooden houses clustered together on the low cliffs, cut by steep gulleys and ravines, with the domes and minarets of its churches towering splendid in the sun above the chaos of wooden roofs. The town has a romantic past. It was here that the rebel peasant leader of the 17th century, Stenka Razin, sung of in many a Volga ballad, had his headquarters. It was here that the leader of the widespread revolt of serfs, Pugacheff, who in the eighteenth century rallied almost the whole Volga region in revolt, was defeated finally by the troops of Empress Catharine.

Not Stalingrad so much but a circle of new townships round Stalingrad is on the way to becoming one of the leading industrial areas of U.S.S.R., moreover one of the most modern industrial centres in the world. Chicago has always been a legend as a city which grew out of the prairie within a few years. The new Stalingrad area shows signs of an equally rapid rate of growth. But since it is a Socialist city, planned from the outset and not growing anarchically, Stalingrad will not be the monster, making pygmies of men by its size and its roar and its animal fight for existence—the fight to climb and have power—an inferno such as the American writer, Dos Passos, pictures in his *Manhattan Transfer*.

To the north of Stalingrad about half an hour by tram is the now famous tractor plant called Stalingrad Tractorstroi. This was begun only two years ago as a result of a technical contract made by the Soviet Government with Henry Ford for the supply by him of machinery and certain technical patents. Parts of it are more up-to-date than anything in America, and it is the largest plant of its kind in the world. Mechanisation and mass production is here carried to the highest point yet achieved.

It employs 10,000 workers and has a capacity of 50,000 tractors a year. All parts needed for a tractor, save one or two special products such as magnetoes, can be made in the works. In the foundry a double conveyor travels the length of the workshop and then back again. At one end the moulds are put together on the conveyor, the molten metal is carried by a small electric crane and poured into the moulds; the conveyor then returns through a cooling tunnel, at the end of which the earth is shaken out of the mould, the metal casting lifted out by a crane, and the earth is carried off below by another conveyor to be re-moistened, mixed with chemicals afresh to strengthen it and used over again.

In the Assembly Shop a conveyor extends down the whole immense length of the shop. At one end, the tractor starts as a bare chassis. At each stage particular parts, carried up by other sets of conveyors, are attached to the chassis. At one stage it is painted and then passes on with the conveyor through a drying tunnel, until finally at the end of the shop the tractor is wheeled off the conveyor and is ready to be started up and sent off into the village to help in the struggle for collective, mechanised agriculture. Around the factory there is the workers' town—large blocks of well-built five or six storey workers' flats, laid out with gardens and recreation parks in between, with crêches and dining rooms, schools and stores, so that Tractorstroi constitutes not merely a factory but a complete new workers' town by the banks of the Volga.

Next to Tractorstroi is the Red October metal factory. It, too, has a large park along the cliff above the river where workers and their families can sit or stroll in the summer evenings or listen to a band or see a film or a play in the large club-house by the side of the park. The factory is engaged in making steel castings from modern Martin ovens and rolling out steel bars on up-to-date mechanical rollers. On the night shift, it is a sight of arresting beauty to see molten metal being pounded by the rollers and spreading out in moving coils like huge red snakes across the metal floor, or to see more ponderous red-hot bars moving like live things across the floor propelled by a series of rotating rollers; or to see the blazing Martin ovens mechanically fed by huge paws worked from a travelling crane, gathering up the fuel from one side, carrying it across and plunging it into the flame-white mouth of the furnace, and then to see these ovens casting their score of tons of molten metal at a time, seething, glaring, roaring, as it falls in a cascade 30 feet below. Before the war the works belonged to a French firm and produced 100,000 tons a year. To-day it produces 250,000 tons a year, and the Five Year Plan provides for 350,000 tons by 1933.

Some ten miles to the south of Stalingrad, on the right bank of the Volga, another giant constructive project, another new industrial town, is taking shape. Here the river is lined by wastes of sandhills about half a mile deep, and the land behind rising in gentle undulations, being sandy soil, is mostly also a silent, uninhabited waste. In the middle of these sandhills there is being erected a regional electric station, a giant by English standards, which was planning to start work on turbines of

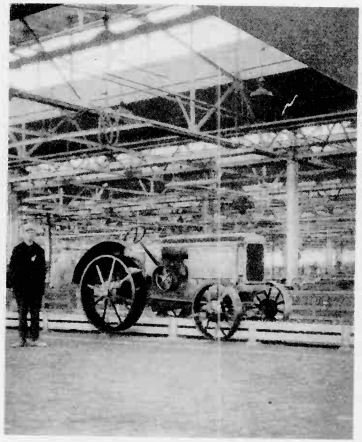


50,000 kilowatts on November 1, 1930, provided certain completing machine parts arrived from abroad in time. Later, capacity will be extended to yet another 50,000 kilowatts. Ten million roubles have been invested in the plant. Seventy French firms, eighteen German and eight American have been engaged in supplying the turbines, boilers, motors and electrical equipment. The whole plant has been built in under two years in face of amazing difficulties. When it was first started there was not a dwelling house for miles; the building work has been frequently handicapped by shortage of labour and the housing or transport of building workers, and the transport of materials and equipment has presented many considerable problems. The engineer in charge of the whole construction is a modest young man less than 35 years old, who served with the Red Army in the Civil War and who himself worked out all the ideas and plans for this power development. When it is finished, he will not rest on any laurels, but, as he put it, will go into the desert somewhere else, to face the difficulties of building some other power-giant. The intention of the plant is to supply the main industry of Stalingrad, including Tractorstroi, and, in a year or two, to become the nucleus of a new combine of five chemical factories grouped around it. When completed, this new industrial suburb on the Volga sandhills, where once Stenka Razin's horsemen rode, will embrace some 100,000 workers.

The plant is coal-using. At present it has to get its coal by a long railway haul from the Don Bas, some hundreds of miles away. Three miles down the river from the Stalingrestroi Station, however, surveying and experimental work has already been started, and construction will commence in 1933 of the giant project of the Volga-Don canal. This will be some 60 miles long at the point where these two big river systems, the Volga and the Don, approach most closely together. The Volga flows into the Caspian Sea and brings down its merchandise through the whole length of Central Russia from the Yaroslav province in the north. The canal, when completed in seven or eight years time, will link up the navigation of these two great river systems—an event of immense economic and geographical significance. For one thing, it will enable much cheaper transportation of coal from the Don Bas coalfield to the Stalingrestroi Power Station, and even to districts further north up the Volga. At the same time it will give the timber of North Russia and the grain of the whole rich Black Earth district of the Central Volga outlet for export to the sea, saving hundreds of miles of railway haulage and railway congestion. An interesting feature of this canal scheme, showing how one aspect of planned work is interwoven with another, is that there is a difference of levels between the two rivers. The water-drop will be used for a large hydro-electric scheme as a stepping stone to a yet further stage in the industrialisation of this formerly scantily populated region.

Here is the tempo and high technique of America. Here is a speed of growth far greater than that of Chicago in the middle of last century, than that of the so-called "economic miracle" of Japan at the turn of the century. It is indeed almost a case of the Volga strewing her deserted

banks with "Socialist Chicagos" overnight. But it is American technique and tempo without capitalism; and that makes all the difference. No exploiting class sits like Mammon over this "Chicago," sucking, crushing, levying toll. The workers of the city do not walk its streets as an outcast race that, like O'Neill's *Hairy Ape*, "don't belong." If Stalingrad is a new Chicago, then it is without its lust for acquisition, its exploitation on a class basis, its chaos and anarchy, its stock-jobbing, its trusts, its financial swindlers, its gangsters and their gunmen; but with Socialist planned economy and collective struggle of the workers, themselves building their own city, instead.



THE NEW RUSSIA: A COMPLETED TRACTOR COMING OFF THE CONVEYOR, TRACTORSTROI, STALINGRAD



SNAP-SHOTS ON GIGANT

PLOUGHING THE VIRGIN SOIL

AT TOP: A FIELD TRACTOR-REPAIR STATION.

BELOW: A FIELD KITCHEN FOR WORKERS ON GIGANT.

INTENTIONAL SECOND EXPOSURE

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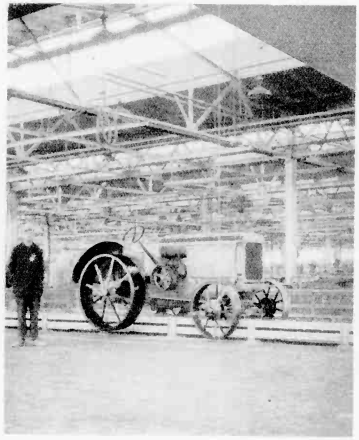

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## IV

Very typical of the technical aspect of the agricultural revolution is the district of North Caucasus. The North-East of this area lies midway between the Don Cossack Steppe to the North-West, and to the South-East the autonomous territory of the Kalmuks, a dark-skinned, high-cheek-boned Mongolian tribe mainly of wandering tent-dwelling herdsmen of cattle who inhabit the Kalmuk steppes on the shores of the Caspian Sea on either side of Astrakhan. All this area in between has for centuries been thinly populated and mainly uncultivated, roamed over by herdsmen with their flocks and herds. As one travels along the railroad which joins Stalingrad with Krasnodar and the Black Sea ports, one begins to see every now and then little islands, as it were, of the new culture that is developing in the district; growing villages and townships of clean-looking brick buildings, quite unlike the dreary log-hutted Russian village that one knows. And every now and then one is amazed to come upon large tracts of ploughed fields, and alternating with the camel teams drawing their creaking diminutive wooden waggons, tractor teams cutting the horizon and eating their furrows into the soil. It is in this area, hitherto virgin steppe which had mostly never known a plough, and where villages are few and small and far between, that some of the most interesting of the new "grain factories," or State Grain Farms, have been planted.

The largest of these is the famous *Gigant ;* and *Gigant* has to be seen to be believed. One cannot really grasp its significance until one has motored over it for hours. It is a new thing in landscape to see a single ploughed field or a single field of waving ripe corn stretching unbroken as far as the eye can see. There is a strange novel sense of grandeur about the size of it—a beauty more superb by far than that of tidy hedged-fields and thatched homesteads. Tamed entirely by machinery:—in place of the bent backs and the puny harvests of old, a machine reaper and combine reaping the harvest of square miles entirely by mechanical means. Previously untilled, the soil of this area would have been too stubborn to yield to the ordinary hand-plough and oxen-team. It needed tractors to break its surface and turn its soil several times before it was fit to yield a harvest.

It was in 1926 that it was decided to carve out a piece of this area as a single State Farm and to form *Gigant* as a grain factory under the control of the State Grain Trust. A railway was specially built from the nearest railroad town, a large mechanical grain elevator erected next to the station, the first buildings—workers' houses, offices, machine depôts, constructed—roads laid out, telegraph and telephone communication established between the different parts of the farm. *Gigant* has now reaped its second harvest and has already brought under the plough over one-half of the total area allotted to it. The soil is not particularly rich, having at present too much salt in its composition; but it yields some 55 poods (nearly a ton) per hectare (equal to 2.6 acres), where a private peasant farm would yield between 30 and 35 poods. A single tractor can plough nearly 50 acres a day. The work is entirely mechanised and there



are 300 tractors alone on the farm, besides machine combines and mechanical sowers. Some idea of the size of *Gigant* can be gained when one says that it is 70 miles in length and some 32 miles in breadth; in other words, it is about as large as an average English county and its length is greater than the distance from London to Brighton or from London to Newmarket.

The headquarters consists of businesslike brick and concrete buildings—offices and warehouses and machine stations—and tidy streets of workers' bungalows laid out with trees and the beginnings of gardens. There are workers' dining rooms and reading rooms, while in process of erection are large modern-looking concrete five-storey buildings—a hospital equipped with modern X-ray and electrical equipment, a primary and secondary school where there will be also special technical courses and preparatory courses for the University. And the whole is lit by electricity. It is a strange place to come across suddenly in the middle of the unending silent steppe.

The farm is worked by field-brigades, fourteen of them, each of which is a sort of moving encampment of huts on wheels and tents, each with its military kitchen, its reading hut and medical tent, and its own tractor-teams and repair-shop. A field brigade goes out for the period of the ploughing or of the harvest, has a section allotted to it, and having done the work of an area moves on to another. At the end of the ploughing or harvesting campaign the brigade then returns to headquarters. So mechanised are the farming methods that a population of 18,000 suffices for the whole of *Gigant*, including office-workers, mechanics, cultural workers, etc., with their families. It is farming without animals, without calloused hands, without the ploughman who "homeward plods his weary way": simply machines and engineers riding them.

But *Gigant* does not stand alone. It is by no means an experimental island in a land of primitive agriculture. Next to it is a second giant farm, *Verblud* (or Camel), less than half the size, but in many ways more advanced in its farming methods. *Verblud*, having a smaller area, has less than 100 tractors, but it gets a yield on the average of 70 poods per hectare. As part of the farm it has a special experimental station with some 6,000 acres of land, and here 600 students are being trained in agricultural science, a figure which next year is to be increased to 1,200. A signal instance of the advantages of machinery: the whole farm was seeded during the sowing campaign in nine days, while a peasant, with his old fashioned methods, would take five weeks. It may be, as some maintain, that *Gigant* is too large for practical administration, and perhaps a farm on a smaller scale would yield a more economical result; but at any rate it is the type of what is being done in the whole of this and other areas, a type of what the new Russian farming technique (for it is more modern than American) can achieve. Moreover, around *Gigant* is a circle of developing collective farms, formed by groups of peasants voluntarily pooling their land and implements, to which *Gigant* renders assistance, lending them machinery and giving them the aid of its field brigades. *Gigant* is therefore not merely a single experi-

ment: it is a nucleus for collectivisation—an advance guard on the Socialist front—in the whole area.

I do not know what the prairie of the Middle West looked like in the pioneering days of America in the middle of last century. But I should imagine that this North Caucasus area is pretty like what the Middle West was then. Like America then, these new areas of the Soviet Union are a changing frontier, sometimes a "flaming frontier" too, where life is hard and crude and primitive and man is battling with nature, not to-day with bare hands it is true, but with Marxism and machinery. It is a new virgin area being opened up to modern civilisation; modern townships with electricity and grain elevators springing up within a few months in the middle of the deserted steppe, with the Don Cossack *stanitsas* to the West of it and the Kalmuks with their tents and their roving herds to the East of it. But again it is the Middle West without capitalism, without the land speculator and real-estate agent, without the booze-runners and the "railway octopus" which in America speedily followed behind. And that is why these "pioneering days" in Soviet Russia are a far greater epic than that of the American "covered waggon."

THE OLD RUSSIA: THE PEASANT MARKET IN BUZULUK, A PROVINCIAL TOWN EAST OF THE VOLGA



V

I have said that what makes the essential difference in substance more important than any similarity of outward form between the Socialist industrialisation process and capitalist industrialisation (e.g. in Asia or South America), is that it is being carried through, not only on a planned basis instead of on the basis of competition and economic anarchy, but by a Workers' State, with the former exploiting class uprooted and the old relationship between exploiter and propertyless exploited banished. It is easy, however, to state this in learned phrases, which, as such, may not always be believed. It is more difficult to get a picture, a real feeling, of what this means as an actual, concrete, living thing. It is one of the most important things to realise in order to understand Russia; a thing which the ordinary bourgeois observer, thinking in terms always of bourgeois democracy, hardly begins even to glimpse. In fact, many of them baffled by the situation have recently been raising the cry that the Five Year Plan means for Russia an evolution towards a new "Servile State."

It is no use to try and interpret Soviet Russia in the terms of ordinary bourgeois democracy. One cannot translate Socialist workers' democracy into terms of Oxford political theory as so many writers are fond of trying to do as a new intellectual game. Bourgeois democracy, we know, is an empty shell at best; it is a purely passive thing where the worker puts a cross on a piece of paper and then leaves the work of government to other people. It is a marionette-show in which the worker has a limited right of choosing the marionettes but he is not allowed to hold the strings. It is for him to remain a respectful, cap-touching wage slave, and for his "social betters" to take all responsible decisions. Bourgeois writers have called it "government by consent of the people." It is—by the consent of a working class deprived of all initiative, doped by capitalist ideology, education, the press, pulpit and film. If we think in these terms we cannot understand the essence of the new Russia.

Quite the most important thing which strikes one in Russia is that in an entirely real sense the workers are the "top dogs" and know it. There is a new confidence: in the eye, in the walk, in the speech, a new sturdiness. One notices the contrast most sharply when one comes out into the capitalist world again and meets cap-touching on the one hand and on the other hand the arrogant bourgeois, confident in his money, which automatically gains him deference and gives him power. In Russia dress, possessions, manner or speech which suggests that you possess more money or opportunities than your neighbour gain contempt rather than respect. That is why the bourgeois visitor feels a lack of "freedom" in Russia: he is less "free" in Russia than elsewhere because his money has lost its magic touch. In material things the worker gets the first fruits—house room has been rationed to his advantage, elaborate rest and holiday homes and sanatoria and former villas of the rich have been placed at his disposal through his trade union. His standard of life (including free social services) is already some 40 per cent. above the pre-war amount, while his hours of work are some 25 per cent. or 30 per

INTENTIONAL SECOND EXPOSURE

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The Old Russia: The Peasant Market in Buzuluk, a Provincial Town East of the Volga



V

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cent. shorter. An essential aim and object of the present ration system is precisely to ensure to the working class the pick of short supplies; and in the last year, to an increasing extent, supply of essentials has been made through organisations—factories, trade union, workers' clubs, etc., which means that while the unorganised petty-bourgeois feels the pinch more acutely, the worker to an increasing extent gets a guaranteed supply of essentials in an organised way instead of relying on the open retail market as much as before.

But the fact that it is a Workers' State and that there is such a thing as "Workers' Democracy" relies on something more fundamental than simply material benefits. The main decisions on policy, it is true, are taken by the Communist Party as the ruling Party; and no rival Party does or is allowed to exist, on the theory that a Party is the organised expression of the interests of a class and that a multi-Party system is a relic of a class society, an anachronism in a Socialist State. It is true that the leading posts in the administrative apparatus are filled by members of the Communist Party: without this the necessary unity of policy, combined with flexibility of application, which in bourgeois countries is obtained by possessing a highly-trained and class-conscious higher Civil Service, could never be achieved. And taking advantage of these facts, many writers have attempted to set the Party over against the mass and to give a distorted picture of what the Dictatorship of the Proletariat means. Actually, the Party is composed to over a half of actual workers at the bench and to an overwhelming extent of persons of working class or poor peasant origin; and continually the Party is being recruited from fresh blood in the actual workshops. Moreover, there is an essential fact which alone suffices to make nonsense of the superficial parallels that are sometimes drawn between the Communists and the Fascist Party in Italy. The whole essence of Leninism is that a Party cannot introduce Socialism mechanically, bureaucratically, by orders and decrees handed down from above. A capitalist society can work in this way because there is the whip of starvation to drive workers into industry. Socialism requires the initiative, the active participation of the masses themselves. Socialism to live must throb with vitality and the creative drive and enthusiasm which comes up from below. Workers' democracy in Russia has its striking characteristic, partly, but not entirely, in the purely psychological fact that the worker has a new confidence and feels that it is his "show." He does not meet the starched collars and cuffs of his master in street and office; he does not see another class enjoying and wasting the fruits of his own sacrifices and toil. And he realises, even if he has not thought about it very much, that he is part of a collective society where, whatever he is being asked to do, the results accrue to the collective as a whole. The Russian worker may grumble: the less class-conscious workers, and particularly the peasants, do grumble to-day at a number of things, grumble quite openly and freely without any fear. Indeed the recent vigorous campaign for "self-criticism" encourages them to do so and to write to the newspapers about it. But this grumbling is of the sort which may be heard at a co-operative



meeting—members grumbling at their own store—not the dark rumbling anger against an alien power. More fundamental still is the fact that the worker really takes an interest in "affairs": matters concerning his industry, cultural questions, or matters of government, to which in this country he would give no thought, devoting his interests instead to betting or greyhound racing, the Boat Race or the Prince of Wales. The reason for this is clear; it is that the whole of capitalist ideology, capitalist education, is directed towards divorcing the worker from any responsibility—in industry he is a mere machine, "his not to reason why"; in politics it is merely his job to put a cross on a piece of paper (the only difference between *The Daily Herald* and *The Daily Express* being that they tell him to put the cross in a different place). But in Soviet Russia he is encouraged and has the opportunity in a hundred ways to take an active, not merely a passive, interest in such things, to show initiative in criticising and making decisions, and in actually taking part in administration. And this he does. The Five Year Plan and the collectivisation movement are not a matter of a handful of officials "putting it across": they are done by and through the workers themselves. The Party does not consider that a policy is successful if a bureaucrat's figures are favourable while the workers themselves have taken no part. That is why Stalin on behalf of the Party in March, 1930, issued his famous letter condemning what he called "the sergeant-major method" of compulsorily organising peasants into collective farms: such collectives would be dead-wood unless their members were conscious of the advantages of collective agriculture and were themselves taking a leading part in facing and mastering the problems before them. That was why the ordinary foreign writer could see nothing in Stalin's letter but a "cunning manœuvre"—a crude view, making nonsense of the most important events in U.S.S.R. to-day. In industry or the village non-Party workers have a chance of taking charge of the administration of social work, of cultural work, of actually taking responsibility and creating things, to an extent which makes the most grandiose "welfare committees" in capitalist industry (cowed, and on sufferance always) a monstrous mockery of the real thing. Very few changes are made or important orders are given in a factory until not only the Factory Committee but also a conference of all the workers has discussed them and passed judgment on them. True, for purposes of discipline the manager's word is final for the time being, as it must be. But the workers if they strongly oppose certain decisions have facilities for taking the matter up through the trade union apparatus with the Trust management and pressing their alternative viewpoint in these quarters. The whole cornerstone of Party policy is that the feeling of the mass must be continually apprehended, that policy must be continually adapted to this mass feeling; and in practice no important step in policy takes place before there has been a full and open discussion—much more open than ever takes place on business matters in capitalist countries where official secrets are carefully guarded—throughout the press and in thousands of workers' meetings. And there are frequent cases of a policy, even after being

decided upon, being changed or adapted after mass feeling on the subject has expressed itself. This is not "cunning manœuvring"—it is an integral principle of the rôle of the Party in a Workers' State.

This fact that workers' democracy as an active thing does exist in a very real sense in Soviet Russia is of enormous importance. It is a new fact in history. One thing it means is that there is a much more fertile soil for new administrative capacity to spring up. The old Russian, conscious of being a cringing serf beneath a decadent autocracy, was noted for his lack of initiative, his powerlessness to act or to take a decision. The new Russian, on the contrary, is taught from birth to be an "activist." More important still is the immense significance of the fact that history is being made in Russia not by a handful of governors and experts, but by the collective itself, by thousands and millions of workers and peasants themselves. That fact is pregnant with meaning for the future and is a revolution in itself alone.

SOVIET ARCHITECTURE: NEW "HOUSE OF THE SOVIETS," NIJNI-NOVGOROD



## VI

An important instance of the way in which the Soviet State plans its policy *through* the masses themselves is given in the present collectivisation campaign. An important part in the agricultural revolution is being played by the *Sovhoze*, or State farms, which as "grain factories" are similar in their organisation to industry in the town. They are controlled by the State Grain Trust which appoints their manager, as in industry factories come under the control of their appropriate industrial Trust. But a considerably more important part still is played by the *Colhoz*, or collective farms. To have based the agricultural revolution solely on the *Sovhoze* would have been to antagonise the mass of the middle peasantry who would have been inclined to regard them as merely the old landlords' estates in a new guise. At any rate they would have been something apart from him, foreign to him: he would himself not have felt a part of the movement and would have continued untouched in his narrow old-fashioned way. Hence it would have been largely an agricultural revolution without the middle peasant. The *Colhoz* is a co-operative grouping of the peasants themselves. The peasants who join to form a *Colhoz* in a district must pool their land-holdings, their implements and their large cattle. Once the collective is formed, however, it is the members of the collective who elect its managing committee and exercise control (within the limits of the legal statutes under which collectives are organised). A peasant who wishes to withdraw from a collective may do so. He is allotted the equivalent of the capital he originally contributed to the common pool (minus about one-fifth which represents what is called the "indivisible fund," or reserve, of the *Colhoz*) and can claim to have a private holding of land allotted to him in the area, although this must be "free" land elsewhere in the village and not part of the land which the collective farm is already using.

In the early spring of 1930 certain important "left-wing deviations" appeared in the manner in which local authorities attempted to organise the collectivisation movement. In a number of areas pressure and even open compulsion to enter collective farms was adopted, peasants simply being rounded up bureaucratically and told that they must pool their resources. This promised a poor and half-hearted life for the *Colhoz*, formed bureaucratically in this way and not by the creative act of the peasants themselves; and it was this fact which led the Party in March, 1930, to issue its famous letter over the signature of Stalin, "Many are made Dizzy with Success," in which the writer condemned "sergeant-major" methods of forming collectives and flayed those who imagined that Socialism could be built lifelessly by decrees. It was pointed out at the same time that it was no use recklessly jumping several stages. *Colhoze* fall into three main types. First there is the society for common cultivation of the soil. Here—the most primitive form of the collective—the peasant keeps his individual land-holding but makes an arrangement to co-operate in doing the actual work of cultivation and harvesting, to pool livestock for this purpose and perhaps combine to purchase and own instruments and machinery. Second is the *artel*. Under this form land

INTENTIONAL SECOND EXPOSURE

decided upon, being changed or adapted after mass feeling on the subject has expressed itself. This is not "cunning manœuvring"—it is an integral principle of the rôle of the Party in a Workers' State.

This fact that workers' democracy as an active thing does exist in a very real sense in Soviet Russia is of enormous importance. It is a new fact in history. One thing it means is that there is a much more fertile soil for new administrative capacity to spring up. The old Russian, conscious of being a cringing serf beneath a decadent autocracy, was noted for his lack of initiative, his powerlessness to act or to take a decision. The new Russian, on the contrary, is taught from birth to be an "activist." More important still is the immense significance of the fact that history is being made in Russia not by a handful of governors and experts, but by the collective itself, by thousands and millions of workers and peasants themselves. That fact is pregnant with meaning for the future and is a revolution in itself alone.

SOVIET ARCHITECTURE: NEW "HOUSE OF THE SOVIETS," NIJNI-NOVGOROD



VI

An important instance of the way in which the Soviet State plans its policy *through* the masses themselves is given in the present collectivisation campaign. An important part in the agricultural revolution is being played by the *Sovhoze*, or State farms, which as "grain factories" are similar in their organisation to industry in the town. They are controlled by the State Grain Trust which appoints their manager, as in industry factories come under the control of their appropriate industrial Trust. But a considerably more important part still is played by the *Colhoz*, or collective farms. To have based the agricultural revolution solely on the *Sovhoze* would have been to antagonise the mass of the middle peasantry who would have been inclined to regard them as merely the old landlords' estates in a new guise. At any rate they would have been something apart from him, foreign to him: he would himself not have felt a part of the movement and would have continued untouched in his narrow old-fashioned way. Hence it would have been largely an agricultural revolution without the middle peasant. The *Colhoz* is a co-operative grouping of the peasants themselves. The peasants who join to form a *Colhoz* in a district must pool their land-holdings, their implements and their large cattle. Once the collective is formed, however, it is the members of the collective who elect its managing committee and exercise control (within the limits of the legal statutes under which collectives are organised). A peasant who wishes to withdraw from a collective may do so. He is allotted the equivalent of the capital he originally contributed to the common pool (minus about one-fifth which represents what is called the "indivisible fund," or reserve, of the *Colhoz*) and can claim to have a private holding of land allotted to him in the area, although this must be "free" land elsewhere in the village and not part of the land which the collective farm is already using.

In the early spring of 1930 certain important "left-wing deviations" appeared in the manner in which local authorities attempted to organise the collectivisation movement. In a number of areas pressure and even open compulsion to enter collective farms was adopted, peasants simply being rounded up bureaucratically and told that they must pool their resources. This promised a poor and half-hearted life for the *Colhoz*, formed bureaucratically in this way and not by the creative act of the peasants themselves; and it was this fact which led the Party in March, 1930, to issue its famous letter over the signature of Stalin, "Many are made Dizzy with Success," in which the writer condemned "sergeant-major" methods of forming collectives and flayed those who imagined that Socialism could be built lifelessly by decrees. It was pointed out at the same time that it was no use recklessly jumping several stages. *Colhoz* fall into three main types. First there is the society for common cultivation of the soil. Here—the most primitive form of the collective—the peasant keeps his individual land-holding but makes an arrangement to co-operate in doing the actual work of cultivation and harvesting, to pool livestock for this purpose and perhaps combine to purchase and own instruments and machinery. Second is the *artel*. Under this form land

is thrown together into large collective fields, and the peasants pool permanently (not merely for the period of the harvest) their large livestock and instruments; but they retain their small livestock (pigs and poultry). Third is the complete agricultural commune—the highest form of the *Colhoz*. Here the whole life of the village is communal, the members living in communally owned houses, eating communally, and enjoying the benefit of various communal services. By these three stages the *Colhoz* provides a link with the old middle peasant. Agriculture marches towards Socialism through the transitional stage of co-operative production. The different stages of co-operation provide a sort of ladder towards complete Socialist agriculture, and in the spring of this year the Soviet Government and the Party were careful to point out that at present the main type of *Colhoz* must be the second type, or the *artel*. It would be running ahead of the rural masses to try to jump immediately into the complete communal form. Moreover, it has by now been fully established that since the peasant will still carry over into the *Colhoz* his individualist ideology, a system of piece-rate and time-rate payment must be made the basis for the dividing of the proceeds of the *Colhoz* among its members. What occurs is interesting. The gross receipts of the collective, after selling its harvest to the Grain Trust in any year, after the deduction of all costs on account of material, feeding-stuffs, fuel, etc., that have been bought, and after the deduction of so much for the reserve out of which machinery can be purchased and social work undertaken, are then divided between the members of the collective in proportion to the hours that they have worked or the quantity of their output where this can be measured.

There were those in the past who imagined that agriculture could be "regimented" into Socialism without the co-operation and active participation of the middle peasant himself. Many of the "Left" were of this opinion. The Trotskyist "Left" of two years ago pointed out the danger, it is true, of the Soviet State resting its flank on the village kulak; but they completely failed to bring forward any constructive solution of the problem; they suggested forced levies on the kulak to finance industrialisation; but they did not see the essential unity of the process of industrialisation and the agricultural revolution, and they left out of the picture the collectivisation of peasant agriculture as the road to Socialism in the U.S.S.R. On the other hand, the "Right Wing" was responsible for the view which would have interpreted alliance with the peasant masses as actual encouragement of the kulak; and they imagined that Socialism could be built in Russia by a step by step process of development within the forms and relationships and within the limits established by Nep. They did not see the need for a new revolution requiring a sharpening of contradictions and a heightening of the struggle before the next stage could be reached.

The *Colhoz* in fact bears a similar relation to the *Sovhoz* that the co-operative producers' society, leasing a factory from the State, bears to ordinary State industry controlled by a State Trust and the Supreme Economic Council. In a sense the latter is a bridge to the former; to



some extent perhaps it is a form of organisation for types of production less suitable for centralised methods. To the extent that either of these forms of collective agriculture develop, the old antagonism between town and country will tend to disappear. For this antagonism is not just because the two are called by different names; for this reason alone gives no more ground for antagonism than does the difference between one town and another or one industry and another. The antagonism of the past between town and country, industry and agriculture, has been because the two represent different types of economic system. New State farms like *Gigant* or *Verblud* are like little towns set down in the middle of the countryside: the fact that they are *in* the country makes no essential difference—so also are the new Socialist cities set down purposely in the middle of a belt of open country. The general life of a worker on a *Colhoz* or *Sovhoz* becomes closely similar to that of a worker in a town: he has his club, his dining room, his cinema, his sport; he works as a member and operator of machines—across wide open spaces it is true, rather than inside a workshop, but that remains the only important difference. At any rate the gulf fixed between the worker in a *Colhoz* or *Sovhoz* and that of the old-fashioned Russian village is immensely greater than any difference which in the future will separate the worker in the country from the worker in the town (even supposing that agricultural towns and factory towns are any different from one another). The old Russian village with its rooted individualism, its jealous land-hunger, its priest and superstition, and the primitive squalor and cruelty as depicted in many of Gorki's writings, gives place to the new agricultural township with its collective life, its social work, its cultural activities, its cinema, its radio, its theatre, its musical circle taking the place of the priest and the vodka-still.

## VII

What brought the agricultural problem into the central stage, pointing imperiously the need for the agricultural revolution, was the dropping away of grain exports in 1928 and the need actually to import in that year some quarter of a million tons (owing to a partial failure of the harvest in the most accessible grain areas). Urban demand had been increasing faster than the surplus yielded by peasant agriculture kept pace: the latter, in fact, was almost "marking time." In the same year the Five Year Plan was beginning; and to this end a large import of constructional material on an expanding scale was required. As a result, the end of 1928 showed an "unfavourable trade balance," or excess of imports over exports, which had to be paid for somehow. As a result, in the course of the next year everything that could find a market abroad had to be marshalled for export purposes, including even dairy-produce which was required at home and manufactured goods such as linen, matches, sweetmeats, tinned goods, and cigarettes. This was responsible in the main for the shortage of these lines of goods in Russia over the last two years. These exports were to a considerable extent subsidised, the social cost of doing this being reckoned as part of the present sacrifice or "saving" necessary to provide the capital accumulation to carry through the Five Year Plan. Apart, however, from a few isolated complaints of special competitors in other markets, it is interesting to notice that there was no general outcry in the capitalist West against these exports. At this time the capitalist world was still engaged in its campaign, organised from the office of Sir Henri Deterding, against the competition of Soviet oil, the result of a real surplus of Soviet production over consumption, with the oil of the Petrol Trusts—a campaign which only ended when the Oil Trusts, beaten, found it wiser to make a contract to buy Soviet oil and market it at their own prices, after which the press campaign became suddenly and mysteriously silent. Last year for the first time the Russian timber selling organisation decided to market its timber independently in competition with the timber of the selling rings, instead of selling it through the latter as before. It is notable that there soon began to develop an unscrupulous campaign against Russian timber "disorganising" the world timber market, culminating in the early part of 1930 in the campaign about forced labour and the attempt to secure Government action in U.S.A. to exclude Russian timber imports. In the summer of 1930, partly as a result of the signal success of the collectivisation campaign, partly as a result of an unusually favourable harvest, particularly in the districts of Ukraine and North Caucasus which are most favourably situated for exporting through the Black Sea ports, Russia has had once again a genuine surplus of grain for export. As Mr. Michael Farbman pointed out in the *Week-End Review* of October 4, this grain export is the result of a *genuine* surplus, in the sense in which the export of dairy produce is not. When I was there in August, the provisional intentions were to export some 3 million tons of grain, or as much as during the best Nep years. Informed opinion suggested that the actual export might probably reach 5 million or 6 million tons, or half the pre-



war figure. It is significant that the howl that was subsequently raised about Russian dumping was directed against wheat but was silent about dairy produce. Yet it is not surprising; because we know that in these days of monopoly capitalism "dumping" is simply the cry raised by anyone who meets with competition and wishes to find organised means of excluding it.

The campaign against Russian wheat-export has the new feature that for the first time State action has been not merely solicited but actually initiated to exclude Russian imports. It is of great importance, therefore, in marking a new stage in the development of the campaign against Soviet Russia: it has reached a stage of the State-organised commercial boycott. In the second half of September the Russian wheat-exporting organisation proceeded to sell "short" 5 million bushels of Russian wheat on the Chicago wheat market. This procedure, known as "hedging," is a time-honoured insurance transaction by which a seller seeks to protect himself against the risk of a possible fall in price of the commodity that he is selling before the time that he can actually give delivery. But the world wheat market was totally unprepared for the appearance of Russian grain. As the *Statist* of September 27 put it, the market was not prepared for Russian wheat because of its pessimism about the Russian agricultural revolution. In other words, it had been blinded by the lies about the "inevitable failure" of collectivisation. Wheat prices were already low and had been falling, as a result of good harvests in U.S.A. and Canada, favourable harvest reports from Argentine and Australia, and due to the carry-over of abnormally large unsold stocks from previous years. As *The Daily Telegraph* (September 26, 1930) admitted, "The break in the market took place before Russia came into the picture." Wheat prices had actually fallen below the pre-war level (while commodity prices on the average still stood 20 or 30 per cent. above). The "visible supply" in U.S.A. amounted to 223,000,000 bushels at the beginning of October, 1930, as against 215,000,000 in October the previous year; while the price per quarter for Manitoba No. 2 Wheat stood at 32/9 on September 4, 1930, and 32/– on September 18, 1930, as against 54/– at the same period the previous year and 33/– at the end of June, 1914.

When we remember that pre-war Russia was a 50 per cent. greater seller of wheat than U.S.A., while her exports of rye and barley were half of the world total, it is inevitable that the re-appearance of Russia as a grain exporter on a third or half of the pre-war scale was bound to affect the world grain market, unfavourably for the wheat pools who are trying to restrict sales and keep up the price, favourably for the consumer. Moreover, the position of the world wheat market at the present day is such that the appearance of the smallest cold breath of competition from new supplies suffices to produce a relatively large drop in price. Wheat comes on the market in a rush at a particular time of the year. The consumption of it does not change quickly and goes on fairly steadily from week to week. Before the war, the elaborate complex system, built up in the days of the competitive capitalism of the 19th century, of the

London Wheat "future" and the practice of "hedging" provided a sort of "cushion" to the effect of changing supplies on prices, provided a sort of reservoir to carry over stocks speculatively through time and so adjust fluctuating supplies to an inelastic demand. With the growth of monopoly-capitalism, its milling combines on the one hand and its wheat pools on the other, this old mechanism is partly breaking down, or at least becoming less effective. Consequently, the smallest change in the supplies being offered for sale tends to produce an abnormally large fluctuation in prices. In the circumstances, therefore, it was inevitable that Russian wheat exports should cause some drop in world wheat prices. The Russian government was naturally out to get the best price it could: there was no point in it wilfully selling at less than it needed to. But when the demand is inelastic—does not stretch easily—an addition to supplies cannot be marketed unless there is a big drop in price. That is elementary. And after the announcement that Russia intended to export on a considerable scale, wheat prices in Chicago did droop still further; on September 25 the price of Manitoba No. 2 had fallen from 32/– to 29/6 and by October 2 to 28/9. Even so, the fall was not the catastrophic slump that the newspaper howls would have made one think. But the effect on the wheat pools was sufficiently unfavourable to cause the American Secretary for Agriculture to take the unprecedented step of sending a note to the Chicago Board of Trade instructing them to refuse to undertake further "short" sales on behalf of a foreign government.

Like most campaigns about "dumping," this one is, of course, based on nonsense, on appeal to petty-bourgeois prejudices. But at the same time it is very significant of what is likely to occur in the future. Russian needs to export at present on a large scale in order to fulfil her import requirements under the Five Year Plan. The success of her agricultural revolution means that she can appear as an exporter of grain again on something approaching the pre-war scale—can do so three years sooner than was provided for in the Plan. Hitherto, Russia has been predominantly an importer of manufactures and an exporter of raw produce; She has figured in world economy primarily as a market for industrial goods. When the Five Year Plan is completed—and the annual "control figures" at present are based on the expectation of "fulfilling the Five Year Plan in four years"—Soviet Russia will be on the way to catching up and even overtaking in technique the industrial advanced countries of the West. In addition to grain, she will then probably begin to export an increasing range of manufactured goods—not a temporary export to cover a temporary stringency in the trade balance, but the product like grain and oil of a genuine surplus. Then her rôle as an absorber of industrial products will give way to her rôle as a seller of them. More important than this, the very success of Soviet Russia as a Socialist country will be a standing menace to the capitalist world. This is why the entire forces of the world bourgeoisie are continually attacking the Soviet Union; this is why, as the deepening world crisis becomes increasingly acute, the danger of a united attack upon the Soviet Union by the leading Capitalist Powers becomes ever more imminent, despite



the inner rivalries and antagonisms. Any stabilised equilibrium between a Socialist and a Capitalist world in one system of world economy is unthinkable, as the march of events demonstrates conclusively. Ostrich-minded pacifists, of course, "pooh-pooh" this as fantastic. So their brethren did in 1910 and 1912; so also they "pooh-poohed" the plans for Mr. Churchill's intervention in 1919, "pooh-poohed" Fascism in Italy and Central Europe. But the signs of what is threatening are there in the sky already for all those who can read such signs. The "menace of Russian influence" in the colonies—yesterday it was China, to-day it is India, to-morrow it may be Africa. The ascending scale of the campaign against Russian oil, timber, wheat. The recent Agrarian Conference of the Border States in Warsaw, with its thin veil of fundamental political-economic aims. To this developing process the whole industrialisation policy in Russia and the success of her new economic revolution is extraordinarily relevant. The one process is historically part of the other and neither one can be treated alone.

I believe that already there are signs that the tone of propaganda against Russia is changing in a very significant way. The nonsense of Riga correspondents who picture Russia as a chaos on the verge of imminent crisis and collapse is wearing so thin as to lose its effect: even the most thickheaded petty-bourgeois gets sceptical after Russia's final breakdown has been prophesied for twelve years in succession. The successes of the Five Year Plan cannot be blinked at much longer. Five years ago benevolent visitors would pat the Bolsheviks on the head as well-intentioned idealists (Mr. J. M. Keynes spoke of them as the inaugurators of a commendable new religion), but since their economics were so faulty they were bound not to succeed. To-day the tone has changed. Writers are beginning to tell us that the Five Year Plan is actually going to succeed. At the same time, there is an increasing clatter about the "servile state," about crippling of individual freedom and of intellectual freedom of thought, about "the menace of Bolshevism to all the values of our (bourgeois) civilisation." In the future, we shall probably be told increasingly about the technical advance of Soviet Russia, about the successes of industrialisation, at the same time as we are told about the "menace" which all this presents to the basic ideas of capitalist society. Like the talk about Prussia before 1914, to stress the efficiency of the enemy will serve the cause of rallying to attack him better than to emphasise his weakness.

If this is so, it will become increasingly true that the war danger can only be combated on a class basis. For those who combat war propaganda it will be idle merely to talk about technical advance, about "interesting experiments in new methods of planned economy," or to cull sentimental sympathy for children's crèches or Lunacharsky's modern educational schemes. Mere sentimental sympathy towards Russia because she is a country doing "interesting new things in the right direction" (the attitude one finds predominant among "advanced" intellectuals, the I.L.P. or Women's Co-operative Guilds) will be as powerless against this new propaganda as a liking for German music or a fondness for

holidaying in the Black Forest was proof against the "Little Belgium" tornado in 1914. Equally impotent will be stress on the "horrors of war," in face of the alleged horror of "annihilation of civilisation"—the most fervent bourgeois pacifist would brave the former to obviate the latter. It will be increasingly necessary to grasp the true significance of the situation by understanding the historic meaning of Soviet Russia's struggle as that of a Workers' State building up Socialism in the middle of a hostile capitalist world. It will be increasingly necessary that the workers should *feel* their relationship to this giant historic process—feel it "in their bones" and feel it in their heads. As an actual choice of ways events are likely to present the alternative in the next two years increasingly sharply and clearly: for the Soviet Union because it is a workers' Socialist State, or for the values and institutions of the bourgeois-world that are being undermined and menaced? Never has history presented an alternative so nakedly clear-cut, so ruthless, so immensely significant.

The October Revolution, 1917, shook the world profoundly and stirred it to three years of economic blockade of Russia and armed intervention—an intervention which would have been more ready and comprehensive but for the statesmen's fears of "Bolshevism at home." The new economic revolution of to-day is as significant as anything short of October: in some ways it is as significant as October itself. And it is likely to stir the world as profoundly. It is more than time that we ceased to nurse our insular illusion that collective farms and the Five Year Plan are simply interesting experiments happening "over there." Already the thunder of them is being felt among the tape-machines and the dictaphones of Paris, London and New York: very soon there will not be a workshop, an office, a tenement or a surburban villa that is remote from the range of their influence. History stops neither for bourgeois textbooks nor for *petit-bourgeois* garden walls.




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